

The Builder.

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THOUSANDS are killed annually simply by want of thought. In saying this, we view all society, and include a wide range; but even amongst building-operatives alone, the class to whom we would at this moment more immediately refer, the waste of money and of life from the same cause is enormous. We are not speaking of the want of thought of consequences which permits a man to drink, and so kills him body and soul, or to fall into other destructive habits; or the want of thought which makes him a prey to deceptive schemers, and so destroys his energies and shortens his life; but that particular want of thought which leads to what are known *per eminentiam* as "accidents," injuring or killing outright, as the case may be.

Where a man unnecessarily risks his life, his limbs, or his health, he is committing a crime against society, and ought to be punished for it, notwithstanding that one often feels something like admiration for the coolness and bravery which are thus displayed, and is led to reflect that the same qualities in other times, or under other circumstances, might have obtained for their possessor the designation of a hero.

"And in what way," some of the class we are addressing may inquire, "do you show that it is an offence against society? My life is my own: it is I who will suffer any pain that may accrue to me through the act; and who has any right to interfere if I choose to run the risk?" Has our querist a wife and family we would ask? If so, who is to maintain these if you kill or incapacitate yourself? Who can say what will be the future of those you have left unprotected and unprovided for, and to what extent society may suffer. Even if you be without dependents on your labour, you are subjecting others to the cost of maintaining you in decrepitude, leaving even higher considerations out of the question, and are committing an offence if you unnecessarily run the risk. And yet these risks are run every day and all day. If any doubt the extent of the evil, let them examine the records of the hospitals, and they will be astonished by the enormous number of accidents to building-operatives that are annually noted there. We would seriously urge on foremen and others to reason on this matter with those who are under them; remembering always, however (if they will excuse us for saying so), that harshness and violent reproof are less likely to be effectual in such a case than complacency and kindly argument.

We mentioned in a few lines last week from the newspapers, that several workmen had unhappily been killed by the fall of a cornice from the top of three houses near Vauxhall-bridge. A violent letter, received since then, endeavouring to fix especial blame on the owner and builder of the houses, has led us to examine into the matter ourselves. The

houses are in Lupus-street, in Mr. Cubitt's new district, with a frontage of 66 feet, and four stories above the basement. The men were engaged in running the compo cornice terminating the elevation, as usual now everywhere, when the whole of it fell, together with the low parapet above it, and carried away the men and scaffolding in its descent. What fell weighed ten or eleven tons, so that it is not surprising that it broke the 3-inch Yorkshire stone put in for the balconies at the one-pair windows, short off at the wall, throughout nearly the whole extent of the houses.

How was the core for this cornice formed, then, is of course the first inquiry that suggests itself. Our violent correspondent says, the piece of York stone which formed the core scarcely entered the wall, and so overbalanced and fell. According to a drawing, however, deposited to by the workmen engaged, the stone passed through the upper part of the front wall (here only 9 inches thick) and 1½ inch beyond, while its projection in front was 13½ inches (the width of the stone being 2 feet in all); but then the course of brickwork immediately below it was brought out 2 inches as a corbel. Upon the stone, were eight courses of 9-inch brickwork, to form the parapet. Two cut courses of bricks were laid upon the extreme end of the stone, and projected over it, as core for the cornice, and then a tile from the top of these to the face of the brick parapet made the weathered top of the cornice: the core was therefore in part hollow. On the face of this projection the cement was added to form the cornice, and of course, on the principle of the lever, exerted much more force against the balancing brick parapet than its mere weight.

Under the cornice there were to be when completed, a series of compo trusses, and these the men were preparing on the scaffold. Had these trusses been fixed in their places, supposing, of course, the wall behind strong enough to carry them, the cornice would have been safe enough, but "for want of thought" the men as they cast them, put them on the top of the cornice, to the number of twenty-five or thirty, each weighing a quarter of a hundred-weight. Connect with this the construction of the cornice, and the fact that all the work was green and subject to the jar of the scaffold, and the unhappy result will be seen to be a natural consequence. Our object in this recital has not been to give or relieve any person from blame, but to lead men to think, and to remind them that materials, unless placed statically, must fall. We end as we began: thousands are killed annually for want of thought!

NOMENCLATURE OF ENGLISH STYLES.

THOUGH the doings and sayings of this 1851 seem enough to paralyse the little remaining sense of right and wrong in art, and almost drive one to doubt, with Ruskin, whether any investigation of its mere externals be, in these our days, better than a sort of busy trifling; yet it is difficult to see the long battles waged about "Late Early English," and "Plain Decorated," and the priority of their invention, without being led to imagine a correct and uniform nomenclature of our styles of building (and another for our styles of window-work regarded apart as one branch of building) to be still somehow desiderata. Assuming them to be so, I would hope that the following propositions, simply submitted to the scrutiny of the disputants, might have some effect towards reconciling them, even if it be only to unite them against the newcomer, for any union will be better than their present discord.

I. I submit that the various members and classes of work, as pillar-work, vault-work, window-work, &c., composing any system of architecture (and above all others the Gothic system), are so many and so equal in importance, and were developed and varied so independently of each other, that no style or period of the art (taken as a whole) can be properly or adequately named after the peculiarities of any one of these component parts; but only after circumstances external to the art, as locality, date, author's name, reign, dynasty, &c.

II. This principle seems to have been recognised in the nomenclature of styles in every art but our own. Thus, styles of music are not named after the prevalence of certain notes or intervals or kinds of time; nor styles of painting after their peculiarities of composition, outline, colouring, &c.; nor styles of writing after their prevailing rhetorical figures, grammatical construction, or any other internal peculiarity. It is very useful to investigate all these things, but not to name styles after them. It is the teacher's duty to show, as far as he can discover, in what things the peculiarity of each style in each art consists; and further, to seek to generalise these things, to bring under one head two or more style-marks previously regarded as distinct and independent, by detecting their oneness as results of one peculiarity of character, different indications of one and the same spirit; and thus to approach nearer and nearer to expressions for each style that may embrace all its peculiarities at once. But, for this very reason, we are wrong in using any such expressions as names for the style; for, 1st, you cannot express in a name more than one or two peculiarities, and they are all necessary to the style; 2ndly, you defeat the very object of nomenclature by rendering it an unstable thing, liable to continual improvement with every advance of our knowledge of styles, their peculiarities, and their deep-buried motive powers. Names can never be fixed, if they are to be condensed descriptions. They will be rendered false and unsatisfactory, if not useless, by every new discovery. Even in material things, what a pretty mess the astronomers would be in if they had kept and used such names as the Morning-star, the Ring-bearer, the Six-mooned, or the Out-planet. But such a name as Neptune can never be wrong. No discovery can ever call for its amendment.

III. I submit that the ancients, therefore, followed the right method of nomenclature for our art, in naming their styles of it, Corinthian, Ionic, &c., which the shallow conceit of moderns has affected to improve into "Foliated," "Voluted," "Massy-Capitalled," &c., as if their differences consisted in this or that member being decorated thus or thus. Any one with the smallest perception of the wonderful complexity, all-pervading character, and immiscibility of the different Grecian orders, must be astounded to see so true an amateur as Ruskin treating them as if all their difference resided in their capitals. Now, are we not committing just the same error in trying to name Gothic styles after the varieties of a single feature (and that not an universal one, the window? I say we are doing worse; for the window is not, in any style, so indispensable a member as the capital;—the latter coming, in fact, as near to absolute necessity, as near the place occupied by the verb in speech, as I can conceive any building member to do. For I suppose you will admit that windows are not so indispensable a part of building as either walls or doorways. But neither of these are absolute essentials: they are necessary only where there are no pillars—and pillars are necessary only where there are no walls; so that neither walls nor pillars are universal. But whichever there be, they must have top pieces, i. e., capitals (whether distinguished from the body or not). So that the vulgar naming of orders after capitals, is a far less error than our naming after windows. Just think a moment how we must appear to the unlearned, prating about "Lancet style," or "Perpendicular," in a piece of building without windows, as hundreds of fine and fully characterised specimens are.